

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. Clinton Urges Restraint in Bahrain, Offers Help to Egypt (02-17-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton telephoned Bahrain's foreign minister, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa, to express U.S. concerns over violence by Bahraini security forces against anti-government protesters and urged that the perpetrators be held responsible.

Speaking in Washington February 17, Clinton said she had telephoned the foreign minister earlier in the day and "emphasized how important it was" that Friday prayers and the funerals of the victims that will be held February 18 "not be marred by violence."

According to press reports, five people died and 231 were injured early February 17 when police broke up a camp in the capital, Manama, that was inhabited by demonstrators who are seeking political reforms.

Just as it has said in response to political unrest elsewhere in the region, the United States "strongly opposes the use of violence and strongly supports reform that moves toward democratic institution-building and economic openness," Clinton said.

Describing Bahrain as a longtime U.S. friend and ally, the secretary said, "There have been reform steps taken" by Bahrain's government, and the Obama administration would like to see reforms continue and be strengthened. "We believe that all people have universal rights, including the right to peaceful assembly," she said.

She called for the Bahraini government to show restraint and to hold accountable “those who have utilized excessive force against peaceful demonstrators.” The secretary also urged the country to “return to a process that will result in real, meaningful changes for the people.”

U.S. SEEKING TO HELP EGYPT WITH DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Clinton also announced that the Obama administration is reprogramming \$150 million in assistance to Egypt to support the country’s political transition and is sending Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns and David Lipton, the White House senior adviser on international economics, to consult with their Egyptian counterparts.

“It’s very clear that there’s a great deal of work ahead to ensure an orderly, democratic transition. It’s also clear that Egypt will be grappling with immediate and long-term economic challenges,” Clinton said.

The United States “stands ready to provide assistance to Egypt to advance its efforts,” she said.

The reprogrammed funding, Clinton said, will help position the United States to “support the transition there and assist with their economic recovery,” as well as to give the Obama administration “flexibility to respond to Egyptian needs moving forward.”

Clinton said Burns and Lipton will visit Egypt during the week of February 20 and their consultations with Egyptian leaders will focus on “how we can most effectively deploy our assistance in line with their priorities.”

Mark Toner, the State Department’s acting deputy spokesman, said February 17 that recent political unrest in the country had “a very real economic impact.”

As Egypt moves toward holding free elections, the United States wants to be “positioned to bolster those efforts and to help in any kind of way,” he said.

Burns and Lipton intend to talk with Egyptian authorities and political groups to get a better assessment of what Egypt’s needs are, Toner said.

[Remarks by Secretary Clinton on Middle East](#)

2. Clinton Opens “Strategic Dialogue” with Civil Society Groups (02-16-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says global civil society groups must be engaged to take advantage of the opportunities presented by popular demands for more freedoms in the Middle East and elsewhere.

She also announced that the Obama administration is more than doubling its assistance to activists, journalists and other human rights champions around the world.

Clinton spoke February 16 at the inaugural “Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society” at the State Department. The Obama administration has been using strategic partnerships and dialogues as a means for deeper consultations and commitment with select nations. The dialogues are designed to respond to the specific needs of partner nations and enhance cooperation in critical areas.

The strategic dialogue marked the first time that the United States has used such a forum to partner with an entire group, rather than a government, Clinton said. She was joined in Washington by civil-society representatives from more than 20 countries and thousands more who participated in the event through a live videoconference.

The secretary said she hoped that regular contact between civil society groups and U.S. officials will help to build “habits of cooperation,” increase understanding to produce practical results, share insights and make it easier to identify common problems and interests.

“Our work together on women’s rights, corruption, religious freedom and other issues is just as important as anything we do with governments,” Clinton said.

The recent political unrest in Tunisia and Egypt “makes our meeting even more timely and the issues more urgent,” Clinton said. “We have to tap the expertise, experience and energy of civil society” to “take advantage of this historic moment.”

Clinton said the Obama administration will more than double its financial support for “efforts to respond to threats to civil society, to help human rights workers who have been arrested, activists who have been intimidated, journalists who have been censored.”

She said the United States has also launched “an international fund that will provide quick assistance such as communications, gear and legal support” to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have been affected by government crackdowns.

Tomicah Tillemann, Clinton’s senior adviser for civil society and emerging democracies, told reporters February 16 that the new funding will be used to identify what he described as “regulatory threats” to civil society.

“These are instances where laws restrict the ability of NGOs or activists to operate and to act freely in the manner that they would like,” Tillemann said. “In the last six years, 50 countries have passed legislation that restricts the space in which civil society can operate, and we will be doubling our funding through the U.S. Agency for International Development to programs that are designed to identify and address those legal and regulatory threats,” he said.

The amount targeting the regulatory threats will rise from approximately \$1.5 million to \$3.4 million.

Clinton said U.S. support for democracy and human rights “is not about siding for or against either governments or citizens,” but about “standing up for universal principles and for those in and out of government who support them.”

She said the Obama administration will support the efforts of partner governments to open their political and economic systems and she urged others to follow their example.

“Governments that pursue democratic change and economic openness will have a friend in the United States,” she said.

3. Obama Urges Mideast Leaders to Be Proactive in Reforms (02-15-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Noting the political unrest that has spread from Tunisia to Egypt and elsewhere in the region, President Obama says young people are seeking better opportunities and ways to improve their lives. He urges governments in the region to “get out ahead of change” and respond to their peoples’ aspirations in a manner that doesn’t lead to violence.

“You can’t maintain power through coercion. At some level in any society, there has to be consent,” Obama said in a February 15 press briefing at the White House, adding that newfound abilities to mobilize people through the Internet, smart phones and other communication developments have made this fact “particularly true in this new era.”

“My belief is that, as a consequence of what’s happening in Tunisia and Egypt, governments in that region are starting to understand this. And my hope is that they can operate in a way that is responsive to this hunger for change but always do so in a way that doesn’t lead to violence,” he said.

The president said that if ordinary people see there are “pathways for them to feed their families, get a decent job, get an education, and aspire to a better life,” the region will achieve more stability. He urged governments to “get out ahead of change; you can’t be behind the curve.”

“The more steps these governments are taking to provide these avenues for mobility and opportunity, the more stable these countries are,” Obama said.

He also said that events in Tunisia and Egypt have shown that real change will not be achieved through terrorism and the killing of innocent people.

“It’s going to happen because people come together and apply moral force to a situation. That’s what garners international support. That’s what garners internal support. That’s how you bring about lasting change,” he said.

The history of successful transitions to democracy “have generally been ones in which peaceful protests led to dialogue, led to discussion, led to reform, and ultimately led to democracy,” he said, recalling the political upheavals in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the protests that led to Indonesia’s democratic transition in the late 1990s.

According to Obama, the role of the United States is to lend moral support to those who are seeking a better life while also understanding that the United States cannot dictate change in other countries.

“My administration’s approach is the approach that jibes with how most Americans think about this region, which is that each country is different; each country has its own traditions. America can’t dictate how they run their societies,” he said.

But there are “certain universal principles that we adhere to,” the president said, such as the belief that violence cannot be used to maintain control, that everyone in the world has the right to

assemble and freely express their opinions, and that people should be allowed to share their grievances with their governments.

He urged countries in the region to “look at Egypt’s example, as opposed to Iran’s example.”

“I find it ironic that you’ve got the Iranian regime pretending to celebrate what happened in Egypt when, in fact, they have acted in direct contrast to what happened in Egypt by gunning down and beating people who were trying to express themselves peacefully in Iran,” Obama said.

He said Iranian desires for greater opportunity, free expression and other universal rights “are absolutely aspirations we support.”

As with Egypt, what happens in Iran and other countries “will be determined by the citizens of those countries,” Obama said. “What we can do is lend moral support to those who are seeking a better life for themselves.”

4. United States and Ukraine Fight Human Trafficking (02-15-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Saying that Ukraine is on a “remarkable journey,” Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton signed a plan with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko to combat human trafficking in Ukraine.

The diplomats also agreed on a plan to assess energy resources such as shale gas to strengthen the East European nation’s energy security.

It was the third meeting of the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership Commission. The Obama administration has begun using strategic partnerships and dialogues as a means for deeper consultations and commitment with select nations. They are designed to respond to the specific needs of partner nations and enhance cooperation in critical areas.

“We covered many topics, including our effective cooperation to stop nuclear proliferation, our support for Ukraine’s efforts to strengthen its own democracy and the rule of law, and progress on global issues from food security to HIV/AIDS, as well as steps to help Ukraine develop its domestic energy resources and attract greater private investment, particularly from the United States,” Clinton said February 15.

“Strategic partnership with the United States has become a very important part of our foreign policy, and we do rely on this strategic partnership to help us guide the shape of our statehood through the waters which are not easy that surround us in this global economic situation that changes with every year,” Gryshchenko said at a joint press briefing at the State Department.

During the commission meeting, Clinton and Gryshchenko signed a plan that aims to combat human trafficking in the Ukraine with U.S. assistance. Clinton said the recent repatriation from Ukraine to the United States of a trafficker accused of taking more than \$1 million in profits from the women he exploited is just one way the United States and Ukraine are working to end this “tragic worldwide blight.”

The United States and Ukraine also signed an agreement that permits the U.S. Geological Survey to assess potential energy resources, which includes finding shale gas. Clinton said this is part of a plan launched when the secretary was in Kiev for talks about cooperative energy ventures.

In addition, Clinton said the United States has negotiated a five-year partnership to strengthen the delivery of health services to Ukrainians who have contracted HIV.

“And we’re launching a five-year, \$20 million program to strengthen Ukraine’s agricultural sector and help build its potential as a major contributor to global food security,” Clinton told reporters.

Clinton said the United States is looking to Ukraine to continue the commitments that President Viktor Yanukovich has made on open government, strong rule of law, freedom of speech and media, and comprehensive judicial reforms in partnership with the Ukrainian people, including opposition groups and members of civil society.

The diplomats also met with a group of Ukrainian civil society leaders.

[U.S., Ukraine Officials at Strategic Partnership Ceremony](#)

5. Internet Freedom Essential to Peace, Prosperity, Clinton Says (02-15-2011)

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — An open, secure Internet that is accessible to all is crucial to peace and economic prosperity, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

“We are convinced that an open Internet fosters long-term peace, progress and prosperity,” Clinton said in a speech delivered February 15 at George Washington University in Washington. An Internet that can be blocked and censored, she said, “can cut off opportunities for peace and progress and discourage innovation and entrepreneurship.”

Efforts by repressive governments to wall off segments of the Internet are doomed to failure, Clinton said. With 2 billion people now online, not only will people find ways to get around such obstacles, but stifling free expression on the Internet hampers economic innovation and opens the door for greater corruption.

Likening the Internet to a modern-day town square where people can mingle and share ideas, Clinton said the challenge facing the world today is how to balance transparency and free speech with security and confidentiality. Clinton acknowledged that the Internet is as easily used by extremists and all sorts of criminals as it is by human rights activists, journalists and legitimate businesses. “The Internet isn’t good or bad,” the secretary said. “What matters is what people who go online do there, and what principles should guide us as we come together in cyberspace.”

“Our allegiance to the rule of law does not dissipate in cyberspace,” she said. “Neither does our commitment to protecting civil liberties and human rights.”

Communication technology opens the door to a global “town square.” The freedoms of expression, assembly and association online comprise “the freedom to connect,” the secretary said. “The United

States supports this freedom for people everywhere, and we have called on other nations to do the same.”

“There is a debate currently under way in some circles about whether the Internet is a force for liberation or repression,” Clinton said. “But I think that debate is largely beside the point.” The much-publicized use of the Internet and social media in recent protests by citizens in Egypt and Iran did not cause public unrest, the secretary said.

“In each case, people protested because of deep frustrations with the political and economic conditions of their lives,” she said. “In both of these countries, the ways that citizens and the authorities used the Internet reflected the power of connection technologies on the one hand as an accelerant of political, social and economic change, and on the other hand as a means to stifle or extinguish that change.”

“The Internet must work evenly and reliably for it to have value,” Clinton said. Therefore, the United States supports “the multi-stakeholder system that governs the Internet today, which has consistently kept it up and running through all manner of interruptions across networks, borders and regions.”

The United States, she said, has found strong partners in preserving an open Internet among several governments worldwide and is encouraged by the Global Network Initiative, which brings together companies, academics and nongovernmental organizations to handle issues like government censorship and the use of technologies in ways that may violate human rights.

The United States supports the use of the Internet by civil society via its “2.0 Initiative,” which connects nongovernmental organizations and advocates with technology and training that supports their work. “The United States continues to help people in oppressive Internet environments get around filters, stay one step ahead of the censors, the hackers and the thugs who beat them up or imprison them for what they say online,” Clinton said.

“As we look ahead, let us remember that Internet freedom isn’t about any one particular activity online,” Clinton said. “It’s about ensuring that the Internet remains a space where activities of all kinds can take place, from grand, groundbreaking, historic campaigns to the small, ordinary acts that people engage in every day. “

The struggle for Internet freedom, she said, is a struggle for human rights, human freedom and human dignity.

[Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton on Internet Freedom](#)

[6. Clinton Says Iranian Aspirations Similar to Those of Egyptians \(02-14-2011\)](#)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the Obama administration’s support for the aspirations of the Egyptian people is also true for Iran, and that the protests under way in Iran are “a testament to the courage of the Iranian people.” The Iranian government’s use of force

against demonstrators after repeatedly voicing support for Egyptian aspirations, Clinton said, is “an indictment of the hypocrisy of the Iranian regime.”

Clinton spoke to reporters February 14 after meeting with Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives John Boehner.

During Egypt’s political unrest, the United States consistently called for nonviolence, supported the universal human rights of the people and “stood for political change that would result in positive outcomes that would give the Egyptian people a better economic and political future,” Clinton said.

“We believe the same for Iran,” she said. “We wish the opposition and the brave people in the streets across cities in Iran the same opportunity that they saw their Egyptian counterparts seize in the last week.”

Urging nonviolence and a respect for the human rights of the Iranian people, Clinton said Iranians “deserve to have the same rights that they saw being played out in Egypt and that are part of their own birthright.” The Iranian government should commit itself to opening up their country’s political system and “hear the voices of the opposition and civil society,” she added.

Clinton noted that during the three weeks of Egyptian unrest, the Iranian regime “constantly hailed what went on,” but “now, when given the opportunity to afford their people the same rights as they called for on behalf of the Egyptian people,” Iran’s leaders “once again illustrate their true nature.”

The secretary praised Egypt’s military for demonstrating a strong commitment to the Egyptian people by showing “restraint and its support of their right to demonstrate” and said it is now being called on to lead the country through “an orderly, peaceful, meaningful transition to a democratic future.”

“This is a very challenging moment for the Egyptian military,” she said, and added that so far they have “demonstrated a seriousness of purpose and a commitment to pursuing the kind of transition that we hope will lead to” free elections and other components of a democratic society.

“We’re going to continue working not just with the military, with civil society, with a broad range of representatives from across Egypt’s full breadth and depth on the economy, on academia, the professions and every other aspect of their very exciting commitment now to a different future,” Clinton said.

One day after welcoming the Egyptian people’s peaceful struggle to change their government, President Obama telephoned British Prime Minister David Cameron, King Abdullah of Jordan and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan February 12 to consult on the latest developments and to reaffirm his admiration for the Egyptian people, according to a [February 12 White House statement](#).

The president welcomed the announcement by Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces that it is committed to a democratic civilian transition and its promise to stand by Egypt’s international obligations. In his conversations with foreign leaders, Obama “emphasized his conviction that democracy will bring more — not less — stability to the region” and “stressed the U.S. commitment to provide the support that is necessary and requested by the Egyptian people to pursue a credible and orderly transition to democracy, including by working with international partners to provide financial support,” the White House said.

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The leaders agreed “on the importance of a peaceful transition to a democratic government that is responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people.” Obama reaffirmed a strong U.S. commitment to “supporting a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East in close consultation with all our regional partners.”

The State Department also said Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns visited Jordan February 11–12, where he met with King Abdullah, members of the Jordanian government and Jordanian civil society leaders to discuss the developments in Egypt and other issues.

[According to a February 12 State Department statement](#), Burns said the United States has a strong and long-term commitment to Jordan’s well-being, and he welcomed King Abdullah’s “recent reaffirmation of Jordan’s ambitious modernization agenda.”

The State Department said that in his meetings, Burns “underscored American support for a sustained, serious and comprehensive program of political and economic reform, which is the key to realizing the enormous potential of Jordan and Jordanians.”
